

EMBRACING CHILDREN: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON CHILDREN ORPHANED BY COVID-19

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

Well begun is not always half done, and, in any case, half done is never good enough. The Centre's response to the Supreme Court that the modalities of the [expansive assistance programme for children orphaned by COVID-19](#), announced by the Prime Minister, were yet to be formulated comes as a disappointment. While rightly feted for its announcement of a comprehensive programme for the most vulnerable section of the population during this COVID-19 pandemic, children, the Centre did not lay down procedural formalities for implementation. It is clear from the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights' submission in the Supreme Court that [nearly 10,000 children are in need of immediate care](#) and protection. They include children aged between zero and 17 years orphaned or abandoned during the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. The total was 9,346 children who have been affected, including 1,742 children who lost both parents, 7,464 who have lost one parent, and 140 who have been abandoned from March 2020 to May 29, 2021. It further told the apex court that these children run a high risk of being pushed into trafficking and the flesh trade. There is thus no doubt that time is of the essence here.

Given the urgency of rescuing these children, the Government cannot dawdle over figuring out implementation strategies. A swift laying down of processes and monitoring mechanisms to kick start rescue and relief, besides undertaking the continuing process of estimating beneficiaries is needed. Children have little or no agency of their own and are still dependent on adults to get by, and the disruption that COVID-19 has wrought on their lives is devastating. The experience of States that sprang to the assistance of children orphaned by the Indian Ocean tsunami can be factored in — they were embraced into the safety net of the social security system, and funds were placed in a trust for them for use when they reach a certain age. While the plans announced under the PM CARES Fund include this, and are far more expansive looking at funding schooling, higher education, even health insurance, a promise is nothing if not fulfilled. The responsibility of the Government now is to go the full mile to ensure that these benefits reach every child fitting the criteria, besides making sure that the children are not exploited with an eye on the eventual bounty. Several States have announced their child-care packages on similar lines too, with some setting up monitoring committees to ensure implementation. Sincere implementation through committed staff, and using existing systems such as 1098 for periodic identification of children in need would be the cornerstones of such a project, especially at a time when the onslaught of COVID-19 is far from over.

[Our code of editorial values](#)

Please enter a valid email address.

From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

END

crackIAS.com